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CHRONOLOGY OF THE WASHINGTON SPRING PROJECT (U)

On 15 August 1967, Dr. Martin Luther KING first announced a massive campaign of civil disobedience in Washington, D. C., and other major US urban areas. The plan was reiterated by Dr. KING on 23 October 1967, and also at a conference with newsmen following his testimony before an Executive Session of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. At this conference, KING called for a prolonged city paralyzing demonstration in Washington to force Congress to enact a $20 billion a year anti-poverty program for the next 10 years. KING again mentioned the program following a week-long conference (27 Nov - 2 Dec 67) with key personnel of the SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE (SCLC) at Frogmore, South Carolina, and said that the program was to be officially known as the "Washington Spring Project (WSP)." Since that time, KING and his associates have referred to the WSP as the "Washington Camp-In," "Poor People's Camp-In," "April Civil Disobedience Program," "Poor People's Capitol Camp," and "Poor People's Campaign." The latter is the name most commonly used by SCLC at the present time.

KING repeatedly voiced his concern over the failure of the 90th Congress to pass meaningful civil rights legislation during the first session and stated that the time had come for civil rights advocates to camp right in Washington and stay there by the thousands until the Federal Government and Congress did something about the problems of Negroes and other poor people. Although KING's activities were briefly curtailed during the last part of October 1967, as a result of a jail sentence imposed for his activities in the 1963 Birmingham and Selma, Alabama, civil rights demonstrations, KING lost no time after his release in publicizing plans for the WSP. At a 3 November 1967, press conference, held after his release from the Jefferson County Jail, he indicated that the WSP could include massive acts of civil disobedience. Reverend YOUNG, KING's assistant, stated that specific targets of the WSP would be the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Bethesda Naval Hospital, and bridges between the District of Columbia and suburbs.

On 27 November 1967, KING called a high-level meeting of SCLC personnel at the Penn Community Center, near Frogmore, South Carolina. The Center has long been used by KING and his aides for periodic retreats away from persistent journalists. The week-long meeting was again closed to the press, but SCLC Information Director Thomas OFFENBERGER advised newsmen that "acts of massive civil disobedience," such as the camp-in in Washington, would become a major part of SCLC activities in 1968, and in all probability, similar demonstrations would be held in other US cities during the summer. Referring specifically to the WSP, OFFENBERGER stated that "KING would dispatch 30-40 SCLC staff members to nine major US cities and six southern states to recruit a self-policing force for the Washington

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campaign and the one to follow it." Each of the field workers would be responsible for recruiting 200 volunteers within their respective areas. OFFENBERGER anticipated that approximately 3,000 persons would volunteer for "the hard-core cadre" which would travel to Washington for the initial stage of the WSP. KING felt that this nucleus would be supplemented by large numbers of poor people from the immediate District of Columbia area. It should be noted that over 63 per cent of the population of the District of Columbia is Negro. These additional personnel, although not trained in civil disobedience for this specific occasion, are being counted on to contribute to the general public disorder; however, recent information indicates that the SCLC is having recruiting problems. Other agency reports reveal that recruitment of demonstrators in northern cities has not met expectations; therefore, the SCLC is now concentrating efforts in the south. In North Carolina, some 200 demonstrators have been recruited and, reportedly, a somewhat greater number in Alabama.

Additional support for the WSP has been sought from groups opposed to the war in Vietnam. This would be in keeping with KING's policy of combining the anti-war, civil rights and anti-poverty movements. KING plans that seven or eight anti-war groups will support the WSP. The inclusion of these elements would give the demonstration a more bi-racial character and could increase the chances of a more militant demonstration than might otherwise be anticipated.

On 2 December, when the Frogmore conference closed, KING stated that he would send a letter to Labor Secretary Willard Wirtz outlining the demands he was making in behalf of the poor people. If these demands were not met, the WSP would be held as planned. Although he refused to name the individuals selected to recruit the initial contingent of demonstrators, KING named the principal target cities and states where SCLC recruiters would be active: Boston, Massachusetts; New York City, New York; Newark, New Jersey; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Baltimore, Maryland; Washington, D. C.; Atlanta, Georgia; Cleveland, Ohio; and Chicago, Illinois. The states targeted were: Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. At the conclusion of his interview, KING stated that if troops were used to put down the demonstration, he would call for similar demonstrations in other key cities across the United States.

Reporters again interviewed KING on 4 December in Atlanta, Georgia, and asked him to clarify his goals for the WSP. KING briefly outlined a series of demands which he called "the poor people's jobs or income manifesto." Specifically, KING demanded that the President and Congress establish guaranteed minimum wages for the Nation's poor, revamp the entire welfare program, end unemployment and underemployment, and alleviate slums and starvation in American cities and rural areas. KING also responded to questions concerning the mechanics of the WSP by indicating that the demonstration would begin around the first of April and continue until America responds. In a continued attempt to recruit participants from the Nation's anti-war and anti-draft groups, KING

condemned US involvement in the Vietnam War and stated that because of the war, America was losing the war against poverty and injustice at home. KING indicated that as the WSP is escalated, all peace groups will be called in to support the jobs or income demands.

On 5 December 1967, KING rejected an appeal from President Johnson to cancel the WSP. Leadership for the proposed demonstration, insofar as is known, is provided primarily by the SCLC. Leadership of the SCLC was changed in mid-December 1967, in response to WSP demands. Key personnel emerging from this reorganization were:

President.....Dr. Martin Luther KING
Executive Vice President.....Reverend Andrew J. YOUNG
Program Administrator.....Reverend Bernard LAFAYETTE, Jr.
(This is a new position. LAFAYETTE, formerly a field secretary with SNCC, heads the "Washington Campaign")
Executive Director.....William A. RUTHERFORD
(Also a new member of KING's staff, RUTHERFORD was a journalist and also served as consultant to several departments of US Government.)
Washington Area Representatives.....Lister HARKERSON
J. T. JOHNSON
Henry BROWNING
College Coordinator.....Reverend James BEVEL
(BEVEL assists LAFAYETTE in the Washington Campaign. BEVEL has also been active in the peace movement.)

KING remained in the public eye throughout the month of December 1967, and in an attempt to gain maximum publicity for the WSP, he announced on 21 December that an agreement had been concluded with the Public Broadcasting Laboratory (PBL) which would allow PBL to record on video tape the entire planning sequence of the WSP. According to an article which appeared in the 22 December issue of the "Washington Post," the resulting documentary would be offered by PBL through the National Educational Television Network (NET) for broadcast either on the day of or the day after the WSP begins in Washington.

During January 1968, KING held several news conferences and appeared frequently at public meetings to explain the WSP. KING stated he had dispatched 40 veteran SCLC recruiters to the nine northern cities and six southern states to organize and train participants for the WSP. At the 16 January press conference he also stated that after the nonviolent tone had been set, "we will escalate the campaign bringing in thousands of people." The mobilization would be patterned on the bonus marches of the 1930's with the difference being that the WSP would not be run out of Washington. KING said they would stay months and months, as long as it takes to achieve their goals.

KING began the month of February with a visit to Washington as one of the leaders of the 5-6 February anti-war protest sponsored by THE

CLERGY [illegible] LAYMEN CONCERNED ABOUT VIETNAM (CLCAV). However, when KING was interviewed at the conclusion of the demonstration, he was queried about the WSP and stated that should the WSP degenerate into violence, he would withdraw his support and abandon the demonstration. He also indicated that if sufficient lodging could not be found for all the demonstrators, a tent city would be constructed at LaFayette Park on Connecticut Avenue and on the Mall between the White House and the Washington Monument. On the evening of 6 February, KING met with several prominent leaders of the Washington Negro community, including Stokely CARMICHAEL, the former chairman of SNCC and currently the chairman of the BLACK UNITED FRONT, a civil rights coalition. The meeting was held amid rumors that CARMICHAEL had accepted the position of Washington Coordinator for the WSP, rumors which CARMICHAEL had neither confirmed nor denied. On the following evening, a meeting was held at the Vermont Avenue Baptist Church. This meeting was attended by approximately 750 persons. KING was joined on the speakers platform by Walter FAUNTROY, the Vice Chairman of the City Council and of the Capitol Area Council of Churches, as well as Washington representative of the SCLC, and Theodore R. HAGENS, the President of the District of Columbia Chamber of Commerce. In a short speech, KING reiterated his earlier statement, but indicated that the WSP was "an almost desperate plea for the Nation to respond to nonviolence before the summer threat of more riots." After the departure of the majority of the audience, KING held a closed-door meeting with CARMICHAEL and other leaders of the BLACK UNITED FRONT. After the meeting, CARMICHAEL stated that he would not overtly interfere or oppose SCLC plans for militant nonviolence but he added that it would be up to each individual to decide what his role would be in the WSP. 31

Perhaps the most significant interview with KING was when he proposed several specific reforms which he said were the minimal demands of the Nation's poor. Likening his demands for the basic Bill of Economic and Social Rights to a bill sponsored by Michigan Democratic Representative John Conyer, KING mentioned two immediate goals which Congress must pass without delay. The first was full employment for all Americans who want to work. The second called for a guaranteed minimum wage, possibly in the form of a negative income tax for those unable to work. Along with these basic demands, KING asked for three long-range programs to aid disadvantaged people regardless of their race. Specifically, he asked for: (1) A two-fold program of rebuilding the Nation's ghettos and elimination of housing discrimination; (2) Expansion of job training; and (3) The upgrading of public education especially in the "inner city." If Congress fails to act by August, KING stated that he would take his demonstration to the National Party Conventions in Miami and Chicago.

Holding true to an earlier promise to travel to all areas where SCLC recruiters were active, KING embarked on a multiple state tour beginning on 9 February. The first stop in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, set the pattern for future stops. He first contacted SCLC leaders and arranged for meetings with other local civil rights leaders. Afterwards, he arranged a series of workshops designed to inform all interested persons about the goals and tactics of the WSP. On 11 February, KING returned

ington, D. C., to address a meeting of the District of Columbia Chamber of Commerce. From Washington, he travelled to Birmingham and then to Montgomery, Alabama. He also travelled to Selma for a brief speech on 15 February. During the period 19-23 February, KING attended a ministerial training conference sponsored by the SCLC in Miami, Florida. While there was no outward connection between the training conference and the WSP, it seems unlikely that KING would allow this opportunity to pass without some attempt to familiarize the ministers with his plans. KING then continued his jaunt through the south, attempting to persuade his southern supporters to contribute funds as well as moral support. SCLC has been reported active in all nine cities and the State of Virginia. On 4 March, KING announced that the WSP would be postponed until 22 April to coincide with the reconvening of Congress.

On 8 March, the NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR A SANE NUCLEAR POLICY (SANE) announced its support of the WSP. No information concerning the type and degree of support to be expected from SANE was indicated. On 7 March, the Howard University Student Assembly appointed a committee to plan Howard University student participation in the WSP. The Washington, D. C., chapter of the American Federation of Teachers also announced that it would arrange classes for school-age children who accompany their parents in the WSP.

On 12 March, the Washington City Presbytery, consisting of 15 church organizations, voted to back the "Poor People's Campaign." Thus, this group joined with the Lutheran Planning Council and the Interreligious Committee on Race Relations, who took action earlier in the week to assist in the SCLC effort to obtain quick action on anti-poverty and related civil rights legislation. In another action, the Reverend Walter E. FAUNTROY, Vice-Chairman of the City Council, Washington, D. C., in a speech at Howard University, stated that "the people of Washington should welcome and assist the followers of Dr. KING." Reverend FAUNTROY further stated "we will show the Congress how they ought to receive the poor people of this Nation." After Reverend FAUNTROY's speech, Mayor Walter E. Washington told a reporter that the city Government would maintain a "cooperative attitude" toward peaceful demonstrators and would help them if it could.

On 4 April, KING was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. On 9 April, the SCLC board elected Reverend Ralph ABERNATHY, a former vice president, and said to be KING's closest associate, as president of the organization. The board then reaffirmed unanimously its commitment to the Poor People's Campaign in Washington. Reverend ABERNATHY announced on 10 April, that the WSP would be rescheduled and he named mid-May as a tentative time for the campaign.

In Atlanta, on 21 April, the SCLC released the following tentative timetable for the WSP:

29 April - Reverend ABERNATHY will lead a 100-man delegation to Washington to make demands on Government officials and Congressional leaders.

1 May - If Congress takes no action, the WSP will begin in Memphis with a mass meeting on this date.

2 May - ABERNATHY will dedicate a memorial to Dr. KING at the Lorraine Motel, site of KING's assassination, and then lead a march toward Marks, Mississippi.

4 May - March arrives in Marks to help local residents prepare a mule-drawn wagon train which will wind its way through the South to Washington.

5 May - The first of three major caravans to Washington begins outside Jackson, Mississippi. "Poor People" from across Mississippi start southern leg of campaign by walking to Jackson for mass meeting.

6 May - ABERNATHY leads the southern leg of the march from Jackson. The Caravan, along with others from the Midwest and Northeast, will march part way in cities and states along the route (exact route unspecified) toward Washington and will move part way in buses, cars, wagons, etc.

7 May - ABERNATHY leads the start of a "wagon train", including mule drawn carts, from Marks, Mississippi. This caravan will proceed through Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, picking up additional people on the way and arriving in Washington "in about 25 days.". On this same day, about 1,000 marchers will leave Marks in a bus caravan with overnight stops and rallies planned for Nashville and Knoxville, Tennessee, and Danville, Virginia.

8 May - ABERNATHY will speak at a mass meeting in Chicago, launching the Midwestern caravan.

9 May - ABERNATHY will speak at a mass meeting in Boston, kicking off the Northeastern caravan which is scheduled to move down the East Coast to Washington.

12 May - The first caravan (marchers who went from Memphis to Marks) will arrive in Washington.

13 May - The construction of a shanty town to be known as "The City of Hope," will begin in a "Prominent place" in Washington.

16 May - The Midwestern Caravan will arrive in Washington.

17 May - The Northeastern Caravan will arrive in Washington.

18 May - The Southern Caravan will arrive in Washington.
14-20 -B.P.
21 May - Major demonstrations begin in Washington.
27 May - National Student March in Support
30 May - A massive march through downtown Washington with participants from all sections of the country will take place.

New York City, on 22 April, ABERNATHY, Reverend Andrew YOUNG and Reverend Walter E. FAUNTROY, met in an all-day closed meeting with about 70 experts in the fields of labor, social welfare and civil rights, to seek guidance for the demands they will make on Congress. Attending the meeting at the Carnegie International Building, was a cross-section of Negroes and whites of various persuasions, all of whom were invited by telegram. They included Victor REUTHER of the UNITED AUTO WORKERS; Gar ALPEROVITZ of the KENNEDY INSTITUTE OF POLITICS at Harvard; Bayard RUSTIN of the A. PHILIP RANDOLPH INSTITUTE; Floyd McKISSICK and Roy INNIS of CORE; Dr. Frank RIESSMAN of the NEW CAREERS DEVELOPMENT CENTER at New York University, and Marcus RASKIN of the INSTITUTE FOR POLICY STUDIES in Washington, D. C. Following the meeting, INNIS said that CORE had not yet decided whether to participate in the march beyond providing ideas. CORE's recent position has been that appeals and marches to Congress tend to distract from what should be its main emphasis - creating independent Negro institutions.

Still unresolved is the question of whether the Administration plans to accommodate the SCLC during the WSP. KING had asked Interior Secretary Stewart Udall for permission to set up tents in public parks in Washington, including the Mall, which extends from near the west front of the Capitol to the Washington Monument. Congressional leaders led by Speaker John McCormack, are vigorously urging President Johnson personally to order Secretary Udall to bar the SCLC from using any Government land or facilities. They appealed directly to the President because of a decision the Interior Secretary made in 1966, when without consulting Congressional leaders, Udall granted a permit for several thousand anti-war protesters to use the Mall in their march on Congress. Senate-House leaders were disturbed because Udall gave his permission despite the fact the FBI had circulated advance information that the protesters planned to try to take over the House of Representatives and hold a mock session in its chamber. After this incident, the legislators summoned Udall to an unpublicized meeting at the Capitol and gave him a blistering lecture. Speaker McCormack recently gave orders to James Powell, Chief of US Capitol Police to use whatever force is necessary to block all demonstrations on Capitol grounds. KING had stated that his people would stage the WSP with or without approval. This could be an area where demonstrators could be aggravated and violence ensue.

COMMENT

At present, there is not enough statistical information available to make a valid estimate of the number of participants or the impact this demonstration may have on Washington, D. C. There is little doubt, however, that the District law enforcement authorities will be unable to cope with any situation that reaches the proportions of the 21-22 October 1967, Pentagon demonstrations. During those demonstrations, the city deputized members of the National Guard, but even this proved inadequate because the National Guard in the District of Columbia has only approximately 1,800 members. This created the necessity for Federal assistance.